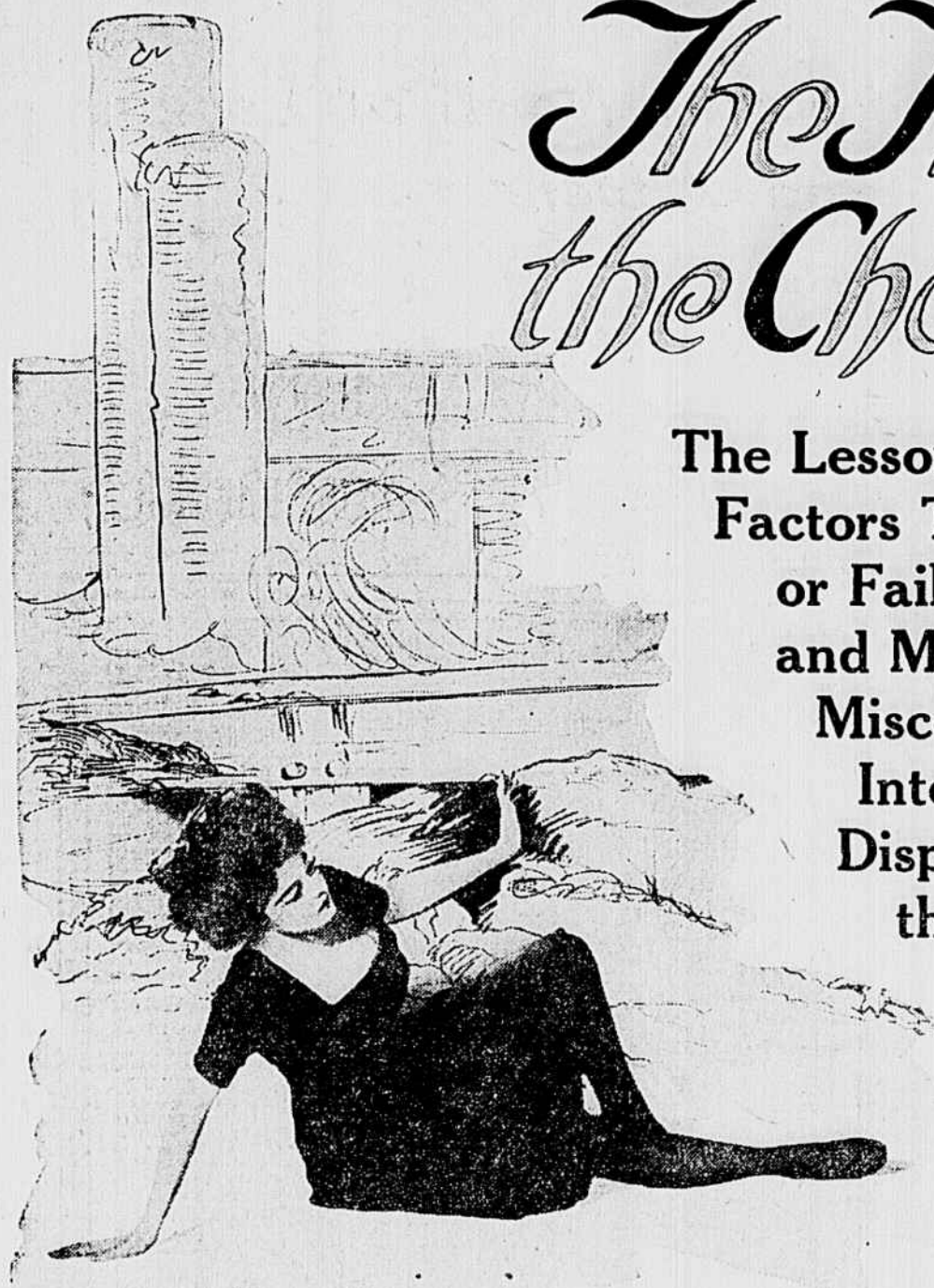


The Truth About the Chorus Girl

The Lesson to Everyone in the Factors That Bring Success or Failure to Her Explained, and Many Popular Misconceptions Interestingly Dispelled, by the Man Who Knows More About Spotlight Beauties Than Any Other in the World

Hazel Lewis, Who, Manager Ziegfeld Says, Is the Best Chorus Girl in the World.



Roma Snyder Who "Went the Pace" and Killed Herself, Leaving a Note Saying "It is the Only Way Out."

By Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.

THERE is a popular misconception about chorus girls. I, who have engaged, thousands of them in twenty-five years, take pleasure in dispelling it.

If I were placed upon the stand I should not fail to qualify as an expert upon this subject. The number of chorus girls I have employed and the amount of money I have paid them for their services would place me in the expert class. As a witness for the defense I am willing to declare under oath:

That chorus girls, as a class, are just as good as girls in any other occupation I know.

Seventy-five per cent of the girls who begin in that humble vocation—girls who are the singing, dancing background of an opera or a musical comedy—are good girls.

The prima donnas have nearly all been chorus girls. Some of the notable dramatic stars have begun their career in the chorus, phrase-repeating semi-circle. Many have married and some of them have contracted brilliant marriages. It is up to the girl herself.

The chorus offers a stepping stone to a wider and better career if the girl makes that use of it. It may be the beginning of the slippery path to Avernus if she permits it to be.

There are temptations to the chorus, as there are everywhere, but the good girl, the one entrenched in principle, meets and conquers them.

The chorus is no place for a light-headed, weak-willed girl. It is the place for a girl who is of earnest purpose and high ambition. Foolish girls who go into the chorus think that the first thing they must do to show that they are chorus girls is to smoke cigarettes. That is a bad beginning. Cigarette smoking spoils their voices, if they have any. It generally impairs their health. I never like to see a woman smoke.

They think that to show themselves up to date they must drink. The girl who consumes eight and ten cocktails a day and thinks it smart is the girl who, in a very short while, comes into this office begging a dollar to buy food. Drinking is a sure way not to get on in the chorus or anywhere else.

Some girls think they gain popularity by being seen in cafes and at cabarets. They do not. Far better for a girl if she were at home in bed than saying, "Well, just one more, since it's you."

The girl who sets out to spell her name among the lights in the Great White Way begins in the wrong way when she makes the tour of the cafes. That way leads not on the stage, but off it. Such girls are unreliable. They don't show up at rehearsals. They are late at performances. Their work is lifeless. They receive their notices, or they drop out of their own accord. Two years is the tenure of stage life of such girls.

On the other hand, there is a girl in my company who has been with me for twenty years. She looks as fresh and

young to-day as the day she asked for a place in my chorus. I won't tell her name because twenty years seem a long time, and some in front prefer to think they are looking at girls who have been on the stage for a short time. But she can dance and sing for ten years more, if she wishes.

The difference between the two types is that some take care of themselves and some do not.

The girl who takes care of her health gets home about twelve. She gets eight or ten hours' sleep.

She gets all the air she can. She refuses to form the taxi or the street car habit. Wherever she goes she walks, if it is within walking distance.

It is a great mistake, that of dancers, who think the exercise they have on the stage is enough. It isn't. The air in which they are forced to dance is the opposite of what they should have for the building of their bodies. The girl who spends most time out of doors is the girl who will go farthest on the stage.

If a girl has the stuff of the winner in her, she will study to improve herself and increase her value to the management. She can take vocal lessons, or dancing lessons, or fencing. She can contrive it, on her salary. Good reading and the study of a language are open to her. The public libraries are free. Newspapers cost a penny apiece. There is no good reason why any one should not be well informed.

To keep herself fit she should eat plenty of food, but it should be plain. She will be better off for an after-theatre supper of bread and milk than of lobster.

Her looks plus her intelligence are her capital. This the foolish chorus girl doesn't realize. Her prettiness attracts chappies, but cafe life robs her of her looks. Then the attraction ceases. The chappies fall away. The attentions of such as they show themselves for what they are worth. Nothing.

The chorus girl who belongs to the 75 per cent of whom I spoke lives at home. She generally contributes something to the family exchequer and she saves something besides. She leads a regular life and keeps her youth. She is in fit condition for the climb.

Another foolish idea that chorus girls must get out of their heads is that to get ahead they must flirt with the manager. That is the worst of rot. The truth is that every theatrical manager is first of all a business man. He will stick to his business principles, even though he is a bit susceptible. If he brings money into his pocket by pleasing audiences, he will advance her. If not, he won't.

The best chorus girl I have ever had is Hazel Lewis. She has never tasted a cocktail. She does not smoke. Late hours she knows only by hearing of them or when the company is kept after a performance for flashlight photographs.

She has been with my companies for five years. In that time I have seen two crops of the poor, silly little two-year-limit girls come and go, and another is

half way through its short term. She looks as young as ever and is prettier. She has gained in cleverness because she is a student. The four c's—cafes, cocktails, cigarettes, chappies—she knows them not.

She is the model chorus girl. She has brains and uses them where they will do the most good for herself. She regards her work as a business and gives the most she can and gets all she can out of it. She is the best paid chorus girl in the business.

It is time to stop sneering at chorus girls, save when you sneer at all foolish girls, wherever you find them. Chorus girls have climbed out of the chorus to heights of dramatic and social success.

Julia Sanderson began in the chorus, so did Natalie Alt, Ina Claire and May de Souza.

Helen Faulkner, of Chin Chin, was a chorus girl. She will soon marry Gene Buck, the composer.

Elsie Ferguson, who was one of the pink pajama girls in Liberty Belles, has reached both the stage and social distinction. She is one of the most gifted of the younger actresses.

Irene Fenwick, I think, was in the same company. Lotia Faust, who became a leading Broadway favorite, was one of the pink pajama girls.

Pauline Chases's rise to fame is well known. Edna May's sudden burst into popularity had its beginning in the chorus and in an emergency that confronted her manager, when he was without a prima donna for "The Belle of New York."

Camille Clifford sprang out of the chorus into the fashion of London. Afterward she became the bride of an earl's son.

Frances Belmont, one of the Florodora Sextette, married into the English peerage, and now one addresses her as Lady Ashburton.

Daniel Reid, the tin plate magnate, chose his bride from the chorus. Mabel Carrier's loveliness and cleverness had raised her from that rank before she consented to marry him.

Freddy Gebhardt made a member of the Florodora Sextette the second Mrs. Gebhardt. I am quite sure that lovely Minnie Ashley, whom we remember as a dainty singer and dancer, sprang from the chorus, as gracefully as she sprang into a place with the social elite, as the wife of William Astor Chanlor.

Lulu Glaser was a chorus girl before she became a prima donna. Charlotte

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From Left to Right, Edna May (Mrs. Oscar Lewis-son) Ina Claire and Frances Belmont (Lady Ashburton), Three Typical Cases of Brilliant Success

Walker came from the chorus. I think it was with Marie Dressler in Miss Print. Anne Swinburne, who is Mrs. Schirmer, having married one of the famous firm of music publishers, is another graduate from the chorus, and I think Eleanor Painter did time there.

The romance of Daisy Virginia, who left the Ziegfeld Follies of 1915 to marry Ford Humboldt Keith, nearly a millionaire himself and the representative in India of a syndicate of millionaires, is one of the freshest of the "and they married and lived happily" tales told on Broadway.

Virginia Marshall, a well remembered blonde beauty, married into one of the oldest and finest families of America, when Schuyler Hamilton, a direct descendant of Alexander Hamilton, wedded

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Julia Sanderson, on Left, Now a Star, and Denise Orme, Now Mrs. Garde-Buller, Daughter-in-Law of Lord Churston—two Examples of Chorus Girls Who "Got On."

her. With the old name came millions. Helene Moyer left the chorus to marry James Spear, a Philadelphia magnate, whose wealth was rated at \$10,000,000.

The brilliant match made by Bonnie Glass, when she became the wife of Ben Ali Haggin, is still a pleasant topic. As pleasant as the more recent one of the wedding of Billie Allen and Jimmie Hoagland.

The reverse side of the Broadway chorus shield is a sad one. Florence Schenck, who came to this city from Norfolk, Va., was the prettiest girl who ever asked for a job in the chorus. She had no trouble in getting one, but she had a great deal of trouble in keeping it. Drink was her curse. She was typical of the girls who, as I have said, last two years, she sunk to deep ignominy. Some one found her living in a room behind a saloon, her high-stepping, high-bred feet encased in a discarded pair of men's boots that she had found in the street. She died, and all Broadway ceased its mirth for a night or two to talk of the lesson of her life.

Broadway passed, too, in its gayeties when the news came of Roma Snyder's

suicide in St. Louis. Roma was a pretty girl, light-hearted, high-spirited, the kind of girl whom everybody likes. There was an unhappy love affair that changed her disposition. She brooded over her wrongs and became morose. Two lines addressed to her father and found close to the empty bottle labelled "carbolic acid" told her inner story: "I am about to finish. There is no other way out. Don't think harshly of me."

Success in the chorus is like success in nearly everything else. It depends upon keeping your head and using it.

And here let me say an ancient and dishonorable lie. The public believes that when a wealthy or influential patron desires an introduction to a chorus girl he can get it. I brand that as the lie it is. If a man asked me to introduce him to a girl in my chorus I should say to him: "I haven't changed my business."

Stars and prima donnas have climbed their upward way from the chorus. Many chorus girls have married titles and millions. Others have descended to beggary and suicide. Their chances were practically equal. Their fate was in their own hands.